

Religiosity and Attitudes towards Homosexuals among Adolescents

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Abstract - A survey of 120 heterosexual students (with equal no. of male and female) in Batangas was conducted using the Attitudes towards Lesbian and Gay Male Scale (ATLG) and Religiosity Measure Questionnaire. The statistical results indicate that adolescents in Batangas has a mean of 76.71 which correspond an average level of attitudes towards homosexuals, that age, sex and religion doesn't have an influence on attitudes towards homosexuals, and that no differences exist between religiosity concerning attitudes towards homosexuals. The results are discussed further throughout the study, and suggestions for future research are made.

Keywords – attitudes, gay, heterosexual, lesbian, religiosity

I. INTRODUCTION

The negative attitudes and behaviours that individuals may direct toward gay men and lesbian women are often referred to as homophobia or homonegativity (Jewell, n.d.) Homonegativity is a multidimensional construct that consists of negative affective, cognitive and behavioural responses directed toward individuals who self-identify as gay or lesbian (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980).

Moreover, the college campus is occupied with adolescents which represents a larger society that continue to struggle with biases and mistrust, misunderstandings and prejudice of individuals who do not fit the norm. Universities and school become a welcoming environment where individuals of different backgrounds can interact as a supportive and unified body. While this is true for many students, the on-campus reality for marginalized student groups is not nearly so affirming.

Some of the universities support equality among individuals of different genders, races/ethnicities, religious denomination and physical disabilities in the course of more diversified on-campus programming, classes, and co-curricular activities. Despite the many gains of higher education toward cross-cultural acceptance, living in an imperfect society all but guarantees misunderstandings and ignorance, thus resulting in unjust discrimination. The homosexual community maybe are the least understood and accepted by the majority population, among the various societal subgroups in the country. In fact, Fone (2000) refers to homophobia as the last acceptable prejudice. The issue of homosexuality on college campuses may produce immediate unease and bias – not unlike the

reaction to this topic within society in general. Thus, the present study will examine the controversial negative attitudes towards gay men and lesbian people among adolescents on college campus.

Furthermore, religion was found to influenced attitudes toward homosexuality. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church and conservative Protestant sects have remained steadfast in their denunciation of homosexuality—despite the fact that they continue to maintain that the sin, not the sinner, is rejected. However, rejection of the sinner is often the most visible outcome of these conservative beliefs (Fone, 2000). However, as Frontain (1997) stated, —When the Bible is used to support discriminatory ideology; the gay and lesbian struggle for dignity inevitably involves one in a struggle with the Bible (p. 2). The practice of exclusion—rather than inclusion—has tended to be more evident in this multicultural society, our country could also be a place of different cultures and belief systems. Thus, underrepresented groups have often become the targets of negative attitudes, discrimination, and sometimes violent reprisals.

Disputes have often arisen over whether Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transexual community should be viewed as a true —minority. Although some researchers maintain that the homosexual community differs considerably from other more traditional minority groups, they are similar in four major way: (a) homosexual people are a subordinate component within a larger complex society; (b) homosexual people have characteristics that are viewed with low regard by the mainstream society; (c) homosexual people's characteristics bind them as a community self-consciously; and (d) homosexual people receive

differential treatment based upon their collective characteristics (Paul, Weinrich, Gonsiorek, & Hotvedt, 1982; Altman, 1982; D'Emilio, 1983; Gross, Aurand, & Adessa, 1988).

Sexual intimacy and relationships between individuals of the same gender are not new to any society, and the historical documentation of homosexual behavior has been widely reported (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1989; Boswell, 1994; Broude & Greene, 1976; Davenport, 1977; Ford & Beach, 1951). In fact, homosexuality has been controversial since pre-Christian times (Ruse, 1988). From ancient Greece to the present, some individuals have either declared themselves to be in every respect a homosexual, or have plotted their sexual orientation somewhere along asexual continuum (Boswell, 1982).

As previously noted, Fone (2000) concluded that sexuality is the last consistent source of discrimination in our society. Educational institutions and administrators are pivotal to any efforts to change the perceptions and treatment of the LGBT community.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of adolescents who attend to a private college and to explore if religiosity influenced Attitudes toward Lesbian and Gay Men. This study was chosen because the researchers were curious about attitudes of adolescent towards homosexuals. Moreover, the researchers want to have more information and knowledge regarding homosexuals.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researchers aimed to determine the level of religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuals and to establish relationship to this variable; to compare level of religiosity when grouped according to demographic profile; to compare attitudes toward lesbian and gay men when grouped according to demographic profile and to establish possible relationships between religiosity and attitudes toward homosexuals.

Theoretical Basis

In the literature about attitude research two theories are especially important. First, *the integration theory* of Emile Durkheim, secondly *the authoritarian personality*, a theory of interalia Adorno.

The theory of Durkheim describes the influence of intermediate groups on one's everyday life (Durkheim, 1897). Every person is exposed to some of these groups or agents, like for example religious organisations, family or schools and classes. These agents play an important role in the formation of one's moral attitudes. The intensity of contact with these groups is considered

to be an important factor in explaining differences between individuals' moral attitudes. A person exposed more intensely to an agent is more likely to adopt the norms of this particular socialising agent. Durkheim formulated this theory while investigating suicide. He found suicide numbers to be smaller for more cohesive groups, since the members of these groups are more intensively confronted with the (generally accepted) rejection of suicide.

Finally Adorno's theory: Authoritarianism is a concept that first came up during a study to the emergence of fascism, at the University of Berkely. The researchers constructed a so-called F-scale, which contained diverse dimensions like stereotyping, actions during sexual activities, etcetera (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). Authoritarian individuals are characterised by a high degree of group thinking. Besides, authoritarians attach great importance to their social group compared to non-authoritarian individuals. It is therefore not strange to assume that authoritarians largely derive their positive social identity on their group membership. In combination with the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) one can expect authoritarian persons to be strongly positive about their own group, the *in-group*, and strongly negative about the other group, the *out-group*. For heterosexuals, homosexuals can be seen as another group. Authoritarian heterosexuals will be less permissive towards homosexuals than non-authoritarian heterosexuals, since their out-group negativity is much stronger. Besides the in-group and out-group hypothesis, the authoritarianism theory of Adorno provides another explanation: authoritarians are characterised by a fear of weakness and non-conventional behaviour. Homosexuals can be seen as 'violators' of traditional values and are therefore negatively approached by authoritarians. Finally, authoritarians are characterised by a strong belief in moral superiority. Combined with masculinity this belief will result in a rejection of homosexuality (Altemeyer, 2003).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Franzoi (2003) to a large degree, it reflects a common experience that lesbians and gay men have had living their lives in societies overwhelmingly dominated by heterosexuals who denigrate non heterosexual lifestyles. For example, during the first seventy years of this century, the medical profession stigmatized lesbians and gay men as sexually deviant and mentally disturbed. When rigorous scientific studies found no evidence of an association between

homosexuality and psychopathology, the American Psychological Association finally changed its opinion in the mid -1970's and removed homosexuality as a diagnostic category for mental illness. (Bayer, 1987) Despite this clean bill of mental health from the scientific community, the Catholic Church has persisted in describing homosexual feeling as —ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil, and concludes that homosexuality —itself must be seen as an objective disorder comparable to mental illness (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, 1986).

Americans have always been highly religious. This statement is supported by numerous Gallup polls (Gallup, 1998). A majority of the elderly consider religious practice to be of major importance in their lives. According to surveys, 96 percent of those over 65 believe in God, and 82 percent report that religion plays a significant role in their lives (Dacey, et al 2004).

In the original study conducted by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992), the researchers examined the relationship between religious fundamentalism and a variety of variables: right-wing authoritarianism, quest (tendency to search for answers to existential questions), general prejudice, and attitudes towards homosexuals (measure which —assesses condemning, vindictive, and punitive sentiments towards gays“ p. 121). In this study, the researchers recruited 617 parents of college students to participate in the research study. Positive relationships were noted among four of the study variables (religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, general prejudice, and attitudes towards homosexuals), but religious fundamentalism was negatively related to quest. In another study examining the relationship between religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and attitudes towards homosexuals, Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, and Kirkpatrick (2002) examined the impact of Christian Orthodoxy on religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and attitudes towards homosexuals. Christian Orthodoxy as explained by Laythe et al. reflects —the content of what is believed rather than (as in the case with fundamentalism) the way the beliefs are held“ (p. 625, emphasis in original). While Laythe et al. reported a positive relationship among all four variables (religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, attitudes towards homosexuals, and Christian Orthodoxy), when right-wing authoritarianism is controlled for as a covariate —orthodox Christian belief per se, when empirically disentangled from the confounding influences of authoritarianism and fundamentalism, appears to be a factor that —unmakes‘ prejudice against gays and

lesbians“ (pp. 630–631). Based on this finding, Christian beliefs innately are not anti-gay, lesbian, or bisexual; however, the prejudice that is often associated with Christianity is probably more closely aligned with right-wing authoritarianism than it is with Christian orthodoxy. However, religious fundamentalism was still positively related to attitudes towards homosexuals even when right-wing authoritarianism was statistically controlled for as a covariate. Overall, Laythe et al. concluded that there must be a third latent variable at work with religious fundamentalism that is neither right-wing authoritarianism nor Christian Orthodoxy (Wrench Jason S, Corrigan Michael W., et al. 2007)

Altemeyer (2003) proposed that one missing variable for understanding religious fundamentalism was religious ethnocentrism or the —tendency to make —Us versus Them,‘ —In-group versus Out-group‘ judgments of others on the basis of religious identification and beliefs“ (p. 20). In the Altemeyer study, data was collected from both undergraduate college students and their parents on ethnocentrism, religious ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism, and attitudes towards homosexuals. For this sample, all of the variables were positively related to each other, and the correlations had similar magnitudes between parents and their college age offspring. The study demonstrated that when controlled, religious ethnocentrism could statistically account for all of —fundamentalism’s positive connections with other prejudices“ (Wrench, et al. 2007).

In the current study of Wrench et al (2007), the purpose of their current study was to examine the relationships among ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, religious fundamentalism, homonegativity, and tolerance for religious disagreements. This study found a positive relationship between religious fundamentalism with ethnocentrism and homonegativity. The study further found a negative relationship between tolerance for religious disagreement with ethnocentrism and religious fundamentalism. Lastly, homonegativity, ethnocentrism, and tolerance for religious disagreement were shown to account for approximately 17.5 percent of the variance in an individual’s intercultural communication apprehension. However, religious fundamentalism was not shown to be related to intercultural communication apprehension. Another study of de Bruin (2006) posits that although the South African government has shown an unprecedented commitment to acknowledging and upholding the human rights of lesbians and gay men, negative attitudes exist towards lesbians and gay men in

university communities. The results indicate that heterosexual students at a university in Gauteng have negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, that gender and religiosity has an influence on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and that no differences exist between race groups concerning attitudes towards lesbians and gay men.

Similarly in Marsh Timothy & Brown Jac (2009), their study investigated the relationships between negative attitudes towards homosexuals and two traditional ideologies: religiosity and nationalism, and explored the link with attachment style. An Internet survey yielded 290 participants, of highly diverse ages, nationalities, and religious backgrounds. The participants provided demographic details, and completed measures of adult attachment, nationalism, religiosity, and both explicit and implicit measures of homonegativity. The results indicated that both nationalism and religiosity were highly significant predictors of homonegativity. In the religious group, homonegativity and religiosity were positively related. This finding was greater for less securely attached individuals. Avoidance moderated the relationship in religious females, while anxiety moderated the relationship in religious males. No significant attachment moderation was found between the nationalism-homonegativity relationships. Utilizing Watson's Ideological Surround Model (Watson, et al., 2003) as a backdrop, the present study of Rosik (2007) examined the structural properties of Herek's (1998).

The majority of research that has been conducted on homonegativity has studied individuals' endorsement of negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Negative attitudes toward sexual minorities have typically been assessed with measures that characterize homonegativity in terms of an individuals' religious beliefs, perceptions of morality, endorsement of myths about gay men and lesbian women, and adherence to social norms (Morrison, Morrison, & Franklin, in press).

As previously noted, there is substantial research linking religious fundamentalism to anti homosexual attitudes as measured by the Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) Attitude Towards Homosexuals scale (Altemeyer, 2003; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Fulton et al., 1999; Hunsberger, 1996; Laythe et al., 2002). The Attitudes Towards Homosexuals scale contains a number of very loaded items (e.g., In many ways, the AIDS disease currently killing homosexuals is just what they deserve, and Homosexuals should be forced to take whatever treatments science can come up with to make them

normal"). However, these kinds of radically anti-GLBT statements are probably not the norm for most people who are homonegative. For this reason, the Homonegativity Short Form (Wrench, 2005) is probably a promising alternative for examining the relationship between religious fundamentalism and homonegativity.

Negative attitudes toward homosexuality are slowly diminishing in the United States, especially among young adults (Smith 2003). Still, according to a Newsweek poll (2000), nearly half of the population consider homosexuality a sin and one-third of respondents in another survey believe that it is an illness—contrary to the stated position of the American Psychological Association (1997, 2000). The social stigma against homosexuality may significantly affect gay's and lesbian's mental health. Studies have found a higher risk of anxiety, depression and other psychiatric disorders among homosexuals than among heterosexuals (Cochran, 2001; Papalia, Diane et al. (2007).

Attitudes also vary toward homosexuality, the sexual preference for people of one's own sex, but here cross-cultural attitudes are more consistent. No society in the world considers exclusive, or even predominant, homosexuality in adulthood to be the norm. As sociologist Arno Karlen (1978:241) summarized this point, —Like sanctions against incest, adult-child coitus, and rape, the sanction against predominant adult homosexuality is universal (Henslin, 2006).

In another study of Del Pilar Gregorio E.H. et al. (2009) using data from national surveys conducted by the Social Weather Station in 1996 and in 2001 ($N = 1,200$ each), they examined the attitudes of Filipinos as a general population toward lesbians and gay men. Secondary analysis of two heterosexism measures included in the surveys indicated that Filipinos held largely negative attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Many Filipinos (about 28%) considered being gay/lesbian as —can never be justified while only 4% thought it could —always be justified. In addition, about 1 out of 4 Filipinos expressed not wanting gay men/lesbians as neighbors. These heterosexist views did not change significantly from 1996 to 2001 and were widespread, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, educational attainment, or religiosity. Respondents from NCR had the least negative evaluations, and attitudes toward lesbians and gay men were positively correlated to attitudes toward sex work, abortion and divorce.

Estrada (2012) assessed the attitudes of enlisted military personnel with regard to homosexuality.

Seventy-two male members of the Marine Corps Reserve responded to a questionnaire exploring attitudes toward lesbians and gay men and attitudes toward homosexuals in the military. Results showed that attitudes with respect to these topics were mildly unfavorable. In addition, several predictor variables employed in similar studies with civilians were examined. Correlational evidence showed that participants expressing more negative attitudes tended to have more conservative political ideology, reported more religious attendance, and were more likely to have had no contact with a gay or lesbian person than those expressing less negative attitudes. These findings suggest that the attitudes held by enlisted military personnel are similar to those of their civilian counterparts.

IV. METHOD

Research Design

This study was quantitative in approach. In quantitative method, the researchers made use of statistical tools in determining the participant attitude toward homosexual and grouping them according to their demographic profile. By using this approach, the study can also identify the participants' level of religiosity and attitudes toward homosexuals.

Participants

A total of one hundred fifty (120) participants with ages 15 years old to 20 years old and equal distribution between male and female took part to this study, a total of one hundred twenty (120) participants from different religion such as Born Again, Roman Catholic, Adventist, Latter Day Saints and Iglesia ni Kristo.

Measures

The researchers used two main data gathering instruments: the questionnaires. The two questionnaires are the Attitudes towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale and the Religiosity Scale. In order to ascertain the attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and religiosity of the adolescents, respondents were required to complete questionnaires. This survey included an assessment of the participants' attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, operationalized by the respondent's scores on the Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG). Assessment of reliability and validity of the ATLG and Religiosity Measure Questionnaire was conducted with each sample of 10 randomly selected. Alpha coefficients indicated

satisfactory levels of internal consistency for the ATLG scale ($\alpha = 0.890$) and the Religiosity scale ($\alpha = 0.928$).

The norms for Religiosity Measures Questionnaire was (5.33 and below) low, (5.32 to 48.01) average, and (48.02 and above) high. The researchers used norms for Attitudes towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale was (12.45 and below) low, (12.45 to 140.97) average and (140.98 and above) high. These norms were utilized in order to interpret the results of the questionnaire being used in the study.

Procedure

To meet the objectives of the study, the researchers used the Attitudes toward Lesbian and Gay Men Scale (ATLG) and Religiosity Scale answered by one hundred twenty (120) respondents from five (5) different religious groups namely; Born again, Roman Catholic, Adventist, Latter Day Saints and Iglesia ni Kristo. After the two scales have been validated, the researchers planned to go to the target area and proceeded to the location.

In order to gather data, the researchers formally asked and requested the target religions to which the researcher gathered information.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analysed. The researchers used quantitative analysis in data gathering through survey. Statistical analysis was used to compute the score from the answered questionnaires and scales. The researchers then evaluated the comparison between the respondent attitudes towards Lesbian and Gay Men and religiosity after obtaining all the needed data.

Results and Discussion

Religiosity Measures Questionnaire was (5.33 and below) low, (5.32 to 48.01) average, and (48.02 and above) high. The researchers used norms for Attitudes towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale was (12.45 and below) low, (12.45 to 140.97) average and (140.98 and above) high. In the United States religious denominations have been experiencing conflicts about homosexuality, and there is a disagreement between and even within denominations over how to deal with it. Such disagreement often revolves around differences in belief regarding whether homosexuality is moral or immoral, natural or unnatural, and frequently reflect widely varying interpretations of the Bible and other key religious documents. (Neubeck, Kenneth J. et al., 1997)

The Episcopal denomination, for example, does not view homosexuality as a sin, yet while some

Episcopalian churches have ordained openly gay persons as ministers, many are against this. Baptist officially considers homosexuality as a sin, but there are splits and division among Baptist around this doctrine and Baptist ministers have participated in church ceremonies celebrating gay unions. Protestant evangelical denominations tend to aggressively condemn homosexuality. In contrast, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the United Church of Christ strongly asserted the need for acceptance of gays and their sexual orientation. While Roman Catholicism views the practice of homosexuality as sinful, it is accepting of celibate homosexuals and has been forced to acknowledge that there are gay Catholic priests. Orthodox Jewish congregations generally condemn homosexuality, yet Reform congregations are very open to people who are gay and some synagogues have openly gay rabbis (Neubeck, Kenneth J. et al., 1997).

Thus, there is a great deal of diversity on the issue of homosexuality between and within religious denominations. Moreover, people who are gay- along with their friends and families- can be found and virtually all denominations, including that officially condemn sexuality (Neubeck, Kenneth J. et al., 1997).

Comparison of Religiosity when Grouped according to demographic profile

There is no significant difference between religiosity when grouped according to Religion. This means that participants have the same level of religiosity even though they have different religion. The data also shows that there is no significant difference between religiosity when grouped according to age. Additionally this also shows that there is no significant difference between religiosity when grouped according to Sex. This means that male and female respondents have almost the same level of religiosity. The results show that participants have the same level of religiosity that no religious sector has different level among others. Despite of differences on religion, age and sex, participants were found to be consistent on act in response.

Comparison of Attitude towards homosexuals when Grouped according to demographic profile

The participants did not differ from each other that no religious sector has different attitude toward homosexuals. The differences of the participants on religion, age and sex is not a proof on negative attitude toward homosexual persons. Individual attitudes can be more permissive regarding homosexuality than the law, but they can be more conservative as well. The

Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) frequently describes the state of acceptance of homosexuality in Holland. In 1968 more than 35 percent of the Dutch population disagreed with the statement that homosexuals should live their lives in freedom, whereas only three percent disagreed with that same statement in 2008. A same pattern is seen in statements about addressing homosexuals (decrease of 18 percent in the same period) and in statements about equal rights for same-sex couples. Since 1980 a decrease of almost forty percent (from 65 percent to 28 percent) and thirty percent (from 42 to 12 percent) was found on the rejection of respectively adoption and marriage for same sex couples (SCP, 2010). Internationally, Holland is one of the most accepting countries together with other West European and Scandinavian countries. However, these numbers can be distorted, since the concept of homosexuality has different meanings in different contexts. Besides, items to test homonegativity have not remained the same over time and across contexts. A closer look on numbers and figures is therefore necessary.

Furthermore, in the article Attitudes towards homosexuality in 29 nations Kelly (2001) shows that modernity is likely to explain a part of the variances in acceptance of homosexuality on country level. Besides modernity, legislation, GDP and democratic tradition have a positive effect as well (author's calculations on WVS 1999-2004). These predictors together explain about 25 percent of the variance on country level. Stability seems necessary to create good fertile ground for progressive attitudes.

Correlation of Religiosity and Attitudes toward Lesbian and Attitudes toward Lesbian and Gay Men

There is no significant correlation between Religiosity and Attitude toward Lesbian and Gay Men. The results shows that the researchers were not able to prove that there is negative attitudes towards homosexuals. The results show that religiosity of a person does not affect the attitudes toward homosexuals.

Holland is internationally known for its positive attitudes towards homosexuals. The Netherlands was the first country that permitted same-sex couples to marry and nowadays no differences in legal rights between homosexuals and heterosexuals exist anymore. The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP, 2010) states in the report (increasingly common, never ordinary) that the attitudes of the Dutch population towards homosexuals are positive. Based on a specially designed scale the Netherlands Institute for Social

Research concludes that homonegativity decreased from fifteen percent in 2006 to nine percent in 2008. Over time a positive trend is noticeable. In 1975 almost 70 percent of the Dutch population disagreed with adoption by same-sex couples, in 2008 this was almost 30 percent of the population. For same-sex marriage a same pattern is found: in 1988 almost 45 percent of the population is against same-sex marriage, whereas in 2008 only 11 percent is negative. Equal rights as regards to living space or legacies were always considered positive. In 1980 respectively 15 and 10 percent of the population were against same rights for homosexuals in living space and legacies, in 1993 this was respectively 12 and 5 percent.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescents in Batangas have average level of religiosity and attitudes towards lesbian and gay men. Religiosity and demographic variable (age, sex, religion) has no significant difference. Attitudes toward Homosexuals and demographic variable have no significant difference. Religiosity and Attitudes toward Homosexuals have no significant relationship.

Family should enhance the spirituality and religiosity among their children by encouraging them to attend church activities and by setting an example. School should incorporate concepts in some of the subject of spirituality and religiosity. The respondents may take another test to relatively measure their level of religiosity and attitudes toward Lesbian and Gay Men and confirm the reliability and validity of the test results. If ever another replica of this study is to be made, the researcher recommends the research to be conducted having a bigger population to produce more significant and valid results. For the future researcher they may use various aspects of religiosity such as religious orientation, orthodoxy conviction, and fundamentalism to be correlated with attitudes toward lesbian and gay men or other variables such as nationalism and attachment style. The researchers are to propose a Gender Sensitivity Seminar. As part of the study, the researchers are recommending the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas to take part in the intervention program that the researcher proposed.

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